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# THE NEW THEOLOGY IN ENGLAND.

BY CHARLES JOHNSTON.

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“And he said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how.”

I.—THE REV. R. J. CAMPBELL, THEOLOGIAN.

THERE are signs that we are in the midst of a religious awakening equal in power and promise to any in history, more impersonal than any in history. As the wind bloweth whither it listeth, so the wind of the Spirit is blowing on the hearts of men, kindling in them a new sense of reverence before the divinity of life. It is said that Luther once declared that in fifteen years there would be no Catholic Church. But, in reality, the Catholic Church owes as much to Luther as do the Protestant Churches and drew from the religious upheaval of his day a new accession of spiritual force and purity. In like manner, one might have thought, a generation ago, when the tide of Darwinism was in full flood, that in fifteen years there would be no more Christian belief. Just the opposite result has come from Darwin's teaching—as was inevitable, seeing that it contains so much spiritual truth. Christian belief, purified by the touch with nature's forces, has burst forth into new life and growth which is already transforming the thought of the world, and with it the Christian Churches.

The tides of thought set in motion by Darwin are washing away the incrustations of centuries. It may seem strange, but it is true, that one result of Darwin's work is to bring us closer to the teaching of Jesus; less strange, perhaps, if we remember that Jesus was full of the sense of the growing forces of nature, drawing thence all his images of spiritual life, and teaching evolution in a far wider sense than Darwin. The appeal to

experience, the return to nature, must bring us closer to the thought and feeling of Jesus. So it is natural, while it is also wonderful, that the great recent growth in knowledge should bring out the teaching of Jesus with fresh lustre and power.

Darwin studied natural life with reverence, courage, intuition and faith. The movement which we may call the New Theology studies all life, natural and spiritual, in the same spirit. And, just as many others were feeling their way to the teaching of evolution at the same time as Darwin, so many hearts in many countries are awakening to-day to the new spiritual light. One of the most forceful and eloquent prophets of the new views in England is Mr. R. J. Campbell, who has succeeded Dr. Parker, as minister of the City Temple. His recent book, "The New Theology," has been made the subject of scores of sermons, in praise or blame. An American edition has brought it within the reach of readers in this country. I shall try to give some account of its thought, as far as possible, in the writer's own words.

The New Theology is essentially Christian, in the fullest sense. It holds that the religious experience which came to the world in Jesus can supply all needs, and only requires to be freed from limiting statements in order to lay firm hold once more upon the civilized world. The New Theology is an untrammelled return to the Christian sources in the light of modern thought. Its starting-point is a re-emphasis of the Christian belief in the divine immanence in the universe and in mankind. The New Theology holds that we know nothing and can know nothing of the Infinite Cause whence all things proceed except as we read Him in His universe and in our own souls. It is the immanent God with whom we have to do; and, if this fact is once fully grasped, it will simplify all religious conceptions and give a working faith.

The word "God" stands for many things; but, in the thought of the movement we are considering, it stands for the uncaused Cause of all existence, the unitary principle implied in all multiplicity. Every one of necessity believes in this infinite unity. The finite universe is one means to the self-realization of the infinite. Supposing God to be the infinite consciousness, there are still possibilities for that consciousness which it can only know

as it becomes limited. Those to whom this thought is unfamiliar have only to look at their own experience to see how reasonable it is. You may know yourself to be a brave man, but you will know it in a higher way if you are a soldier facing the cannon's mouth; you will know it in a still different way if you have to face the hostility and prejudice of a whole community for standing by something which you believe to be right. It is one thing to know that you are a lover of truth; it is another thing to realize it when your immediate interest and your immediate safety would bid you hedge and lie. These facts of human nature may tell us something about God. To all eternity God is what He is and never can be other, but it will take Him to all eternity to live out all that He is. In order to manifest the possibilities of His being, God must limit that being. There is no other way in which the fullest self-realization can be attained. No part of the universe has value in and for itself alone; it has value only as it expresses God. To see one form break up and another take its place is no calamity, however terrible it may seem, for it only means that the life contained in that form has gone back to the universal life, and will express itself again in some higher and better form. To think of God in this way is an inspiration and a help in the doing of the humblest tasks. It redeems life from the dominion of the sordid and the commonplace. It supplies an incentive to endeavor, and fills the heart with hope and confidence. To put it in homely, every-day phraseology, God is getting at something and we must help Him. We must be His eyes and hands and feet; we must be laborers together with Him. This fits in with what science has to say about the very constitution of the universe; it is all of a piece; there are no gaps anywhere. It is a divine experiment without risk of failure, and we must interpret it in terms of our own highest.

It follows from what has already been said that we know nothing and can know nothing of God except as we read Him in the universe, and we can only interpret the universe in terms of our own consciousness. In other words, man is a microcosm of the universe. What the universe may be, we do not know. We can only know it in so far as it produces images in our minds, and enters into our individual consciousness. The New Theology starts with the assumption that the universe is God's thought about Himself, and that "in so far as I am able to think it

along with Him, 'I and my Father (even metaphysically speaking) are one.'" The so-called material world is our consciousness of reality exercising itself along a strictly limited plane. We can know just as much as we are constituted to know, and no more. But it is all a question of consciousness. The larger and fuller a consciousness becomes, the more it can grasp and hold of the consciousness of God, the fundamental reality of our being as of everything else.

We have an opening into larger fields of consciousness in our knowledge of what is called the subconscious mind, or the subliminal consciousness. Our discovery of its existence has taught us that our ordinary consciousness is but a small corner of our larger consciousness. It has been well compared to an island in the Pacific, which is really the summit of a mountain whose base is miles below the surface. Summit and base are one, and yet no one realizes when standing on the little island that he is perched at the very top of a mountain peak. So it is with our every-day consciousness of ourselves; we find it difficult to realize that this consciousness is not all there is of us. But when we come to examine the facts, the conclusion is irresistible, that of our truer, deeper being we are ordinarily quite unconscious. Beyond the ordinary self, whom we are familiar with, there is a larger self, vastly greater than we know. This larger self is, in all probability, a perfect and eternal spiritual being integral to the being of God. The surface self is the incarnation of some portion of that true eternal self which is one with God.

Another inference from our knowledge of the subconscious mind is that of the fundamental unity of the whole human race. Ultimately your being and mine are one, and we shall come to know it. Individuality only has meaning in relation to the whole, and individual consciousness can only be fulfilled by expanding until it embraces the whole. Nothing that exists in our consciousness now and constitutes our self-knowledge will ever be obliterated or ever can be, but in a higher state of existence we shall realize it to be a part of the universal stock. "I shall not cease to be I, nor you to be you; but there must be a region of experience where we shall find that you and I are one."

A third inference, already implied in all that has gone before, is that the highest of all selves, the ultimate Self of the universe, is God. The New Testament speaks of man as body, soul and

spirit. The body is the thought form through which the individuality finds expression on our present limited plane; the soul is a man's consciousness of himself as apart from all the rest of existence and even from God—it is the bay seeing itself as the bay and not as the ocean; the spirit is the true being thus limited and expressed—it is the deathless divine within us. The soul, therefore, is what we make it; the spirit we can neither make nor mar, for it is at once our being and God's. "God is my deeper Self and yours, too; He is the Self of the universe and knows all about it." He is never baffled and cannot be baffled; the whole cosmic process is one long incarnation and uprising of the being of God from itself to itself. The being of God is a complex unity, containing within itself and harmonizing every form of self-consciousness that can possibly exist. No one need be afraid that in believing this he is assenting to the final obliteration of his own personality. No form of self-consciousness can ever perish. It completes itself in becoming infinite, but it cannot be destroyed.

We come now to the personality of Jesus. In the view of the New Theology, the character of Jesus represents the highest standard for human attainment; it is an ideal already manifested in history. If the life of Jesus was lived consistently, from first to last, with perfect love, directed toward impersonal ends, in such a way as to be and do the utmost for the whole, what can we call it except divine? We should restrict the word "divine" to the kind of consciousness which knows itself to be, and rejoices to be, the expression of a love which is a consistent self-giving to the universal life. Jesus was divine because his life was governed wholly by this principle.

In Jesus, humanity was divinity, and divinity humanity. Christendom recognizes the life of Jesus as the standard of human excellence. But this is not to say that we shall never reach that standard too. Quite the contrary. We must reach it, in order to fulfil our destiny and to crown and complete the work of Jesus. Traditional orthodoxy would restrict the description, "God manifest in the flesh," to Jesus alone. The New Theology would extend it in a lesser degree to all humanity, and would maintain that, in the end, it will be as true of every individual soul as ever it was of Jesus: "as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one of us. . . . I

in them and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one."

The reason why the name of Jesus has such power in the world to-day is because a perfectly noble and unselfish life was crowned by a perfectly sacrificial death. The life and death together were a perfect self-offering, the offering of the unit to the whole, the individual to the race, the Son to the Father, "and, therefore, the greatest manifestation of the innermost of God that has ever been made to the world." In this self-offering was the perfect manifestation of the eternal Christ, the humanity which reveals the innermost of God, the humanity which is love. To partake of the benefits of that Atonement, we have to unite ourselves to it; "to die to self with Christ, and rise with Him into the experience of larger, fuller life, the life eternal."

While the resurrection is a symbol, the New Theology holds that it is also a fact, taking its stand on broad ground that, without a belief in a resurrection, Christianity could not have made a start at all. The disciples must have become convinced that they had seen Jesus face to face, after the world believed Him to be dead and buried. How are we to account for this confidence of theirs that they had once more looked upon the face of Jesus?

In the view of Mr. Campbell, insistence upon the impossibility of a physical resurrection presumes an essential distinction between spirit and matter, which he cannot admit. The philosophy underlying the New Theology may be called a monistic idealism, and monistic idealism recognizes no fundamental distinction between matter and spirit. The fundamental reality is consciousness. The so-called material world is the product of consciousness exercising itself along a certain limited plane; the next stage of consciousness above this is not an absolute break with it, although it is an expansion of experience or a readjustment of focus. "Admitting that individual consciousness persists beyond the change called death, it only means that such consciousness is being exercised along another plane; from a three-dimensional, it has entered a four-dimensional, world. This new world is no less and no more material than the present; it is all a question of the range of consciousness. . . . Does this throw any light upon the mysterious appearances and disappearances of the body of Jesus? . . . Here we have a being, whose consciousness belongs to the fourth-dimensional plane, adjusting Himself to

the capacity of those on a three-dimensional plane for the sake of proving beyond dispute that—

‘Life is ever lord of death,  
And love can never lose its own.’

This seems to me the most reasonable explanation of the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus, and the impression produced by them on the minds of His disciples.”

So far, the views of this eloquent preacher on the main points of Christian teaching. I have used his own words as far as possible throughout, inserting marks of quotation where misunderstanding might arise from the use of the first person. It must be held in mind that Mr. Campbell addresses himself with persuasive reasonableness to the many doubts and objections which his views cannot fail to arouse. To do full justice to his thought and method, readers must go to his book.

## II.—SIR OLIVER LODGE, SCIENTIST.

Theology has gone thus far toward an understanding and reconciliation with the modern philosophic spirit. Let us see what science, the other pole of organized thought, has to say of the same high problems. It would, of course, have been conceivable that the new forces of knowledge should profoundly affect theology, but that, at the same time, students of science should restrict themselves to the study of natural phenomena, and hold aloof from all religious themes. They have not done so, however. One of the most eminent men of science, Sir Oliver Lodge, has devoted years of thought and study to these very questions, viewed in the light of scientific knowledge. Let me try to give some account of his conclusions, as stated in his recent book, “The Substance of Faith,” once more using his own words as far as possible.

In the view of Sir Oliver Lodge, the law of the Universe, and the will of God are to be regarded as in some sort synonymous terms. It is impossible properly to define such a term as “God,” but it is permissible reverently to use the term for a mode of regarding the Universe as invested with what in human beings we call personality, consciousness and other forms of intelligence, emotion and will. These attributes, undoubtedly possessed by a part, are not to be denied to the whole, however little we may be able as yet to form a clear conception of their larger meaning.



We are a part of the Universe, and the Universe is a part of God. Even we also, therefore, have a Divine Nature and may truly be called sons and co-workers with God.

The process of evolution can be regarded as the gradual unfolding of the Divine Thought, or *Logos*, throughout the universe, by the action of Spirit upon matter. Achievement seems as if irradiated by a certain happiness: and thus a poet like Browning is led to speak of the Divine Being as renewing his ancient creative rapture in the processes of nature: joying in the sunbeams basking upon sand, sharing the pleasures of the wild life in the creatures of the woods,

“Where dwells enjoyment there is He;”

and so to conjecture that

“God tastes an infinite joy  
In infinite ways—one everlasting bliss  
From whom all being emanates, all power  
Proceeds; in whom is life for evermore.”

The Intelligence which guides things is not something external to the scheme, clumsily interfering with it by muscular action, as we are constrained to do, when we interfere at all; but is something within and inseparable from it, as human thought is within and inseparable from the action of our brains. In some partially similar way we conceive that the multifarious processes in nature, with neither the origin nor maintenance of which we have had anything to do, must be guided and controlled by some Thought and Purpose, immanent in everything, but revealed only to those with sufficiently awakened perceptions. To the highest members of our race, the Intelligence and Purpose, underlying the whole mystery of existence, elaborating the details of evolution, are clearly visible.

The double nature of man,—the inherited animal tendencies and the inspired spiritual aspirations,—if they can both be fully admitted, reconcile many difficulties. Our body is an individual collocation of cells, which began to form and grow together at a certain date, and will presently be dispersed; but the constructing and dominating reality called our “soul” did not then begin to exist, nor will it cease with bodily decay. Interaction with the material world then began, and will then cease, but we ourselves in essence are persistent and immortal. Even our personality

and individuality may be persistent, if our character be sufficiently developed to possess a reality of its own. In our present state, truly, the memory of our past is imperfect or non-existent; but, when we waken and shake off the tenement of matter, our memory and consciousness may enlarge too, as we rejoin the larger self of which only a part is now manifested in mortal flesh.

The ancient doctrine of a previous state of existence, of which we are now entranced into forgetfulness, is inculcated in the well-known lines of Wordsworth's "Ode":

"Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:  
The Soul that rises with us, our life's star,  
Hath had elsewhere its setting,  
And cometh from afar:  
Not in entire forgetfulness,  
And not in utter nakedness,  
But trailing clouds of glory do we come  
From God, who is our home."

The idea of gradual incarnation—growing as the brain and body grow, but never attaining any approach to completeness even in the greatest of men—sets one above innumerable petty difficulties, and seems an opening in the direction of the truth. On this view, the portion of the larger self incarnated in an infant or a feeble-minded person is but small: in normal cases, more appears as the body is fitted to receive it. In some cases, much appears, thus constituting a great man; while in others, again, a link of occasional communication is left open between the part and the whole—producing what we call "genius." Second childishness is the gradual abandonment of the material vehicle, as it gets worn out or damaged. But, during the episode of this life, man is never a complete self, his roots are in another order of being, he is moving about in worlds not realized, he is as if walking in a vain shadow and disquieting himself in vain.

As to the question whether we ever again live on earth, it appears unlikely on this view that a given developed individual will appear again in unmodified form. If my present self is a fraction of a larger self, some other fraction of that larger self may readily be thought of as arriving,—to gain practical experience in the world of matter, and to return with developed character to the whole whence it sprang. And this operation may be repeated frequently; but these hypothetical fractional appearances can hardly be spoken of as reincarnations. We must not dogma-

tize, however, on the subject, and the case of the multitudes at present thwarted and returned at infancy may demand separate treatment.

The idea of Redemption or Regeneration, in its highest and most Christian form, is applicable to both soul and body. The life of Christ shows us that the whole man can be regenerated as he stands; that we have not to wait for a future state, that the Kingdom of Heaven is in our midst and may be assimilated by us here and now. The term "salvation" should not be limited to the soul, but should apply to the whole man. What kind of transfiguration may be possible, *or may have been possible*, in the case of a perfectly emancipated and glorified body we do not yet know.

The most essential element in Christianity is its conception of a human God; of a God, in the first place, not apart from the Universe, not outside it and distinct from it, but immanent in it; yet not immanent only, but actually incarnate, incarnate in it and revealed in the Incarnation. The nature of God is displayed in part by everything, to those who have eyes to see; but it is displayed most clearly and fully by the highest type of existence, the highest experience to which the process of evolution has so far opened our senses. The Humanity of God, the Divinity of man, is the essence of the Christian revelation.

Here is the central thought of Sir Oliver Lodge, speaking as a representative of the foremost science of our time. One cannot fail to see that, point by point, he is teaching the same doctrine as Mr. Campbell: the immanent God; the personal self as only a fragment of the higher self; the higher self as a link, a stepping-stone to the divine consciousness; the incarnation of Jesus, His life and death, as revelations of divine consciousness, and therefore a prophecy of that future when "we shall be like Him in glory." The thoughts, the very words, are the same. Not that either borrows from the other; but the same Spirit is blowing on the hearts of both, telling of a new awakening of the religious life of mankind.

CHARLES JOHNSTON.